

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MEXICO 05205 311812Z  
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T MEXICO 05205

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINR, MOPS, CU, MX  
SUBJECT: BRIEFING OF MEXICAN FOREIGN SECRETARY ROEL ON  
CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA

REF: STATE 075151

1. ALTHOUGH REFTEL WAS INFO NOT ACTION TO MEXICO CITY,  
I INFORMED SECRETARY ROEL OF DATA IN PARA 4 REFTEL,  
INCLUDING CURRENT CUBAN TROOP STRENGTH IN ETHIOPIA, INDI-  
CATIONS OF CUBAN UNWILLINGNESS TO BEGIN WITHDRAWALS, SIZE  
OF CUBAN FORCE IN ANGOLA, AGGREGATE CUBAN STRENGTH IN 14  
AFRICAN REPUBLICS, AND OUR CONCERN CUBAN MILITARY ALSO MAY  
BECOME INVOLVED IN RHODESIA.

2. ROEL RECAPITULATED CASTRO'S REACTION DURING THEIR TWO  
CONVERSATIONS--DURING HIS FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO CUBA,  
AND DURING HIS SECOND SECRET TRIP TO HAVANA FOLLOW  
VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S VISIT TO MEXICO, WHEN HE SPENT  
TWO AND ONE HALF HOURS WITH FIDEL. ROEL SAID THAT CASTRO  
ASKED DURING THAT CONVERSATION WHETHER MEXICAN APPROACH AT  
US INSPIRATION ON TROOPS IN ETHIOPIA SHOULD BE INTERPRETED  
AS "A THREAT, OR A POINT OF NEGOTIATION" AND THAT FOREIGN  
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MINISTER MALMIERCA ASKED QUESTION IN IDENTICAL LANGUAGE  
DURING HIS LATE JANUARY VISIT TO MEXICO CITY, THUS SHOWING  
IT TO BE SOMETHING GOC HAD THOUGHT ABOUT AND DISCUSSED.

3. ROEL PROVIDED HIS OWN INTERPRETATION OF CUBAN SITUA-  
TION ALONG FOLLOWING LINE: CUBA IS DEEPLY IN DEBT TO  
SOVIETS FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE SINCE 1959, AND IS NOW

"PAYING A TRIBUTE IN BLOOD TO THE SOVIETS" BY PROVING TROOPS FOR THE USSR'S ETHIOPIAN ADVENTURE. IN HIS TALK WITH ROEL, CASTRO STARTED ON HIS ARGUMENTS FOR AND EXPLANATIONS OF THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA BEFORE ROEL HAD A CHANCE TO RAISE THE TOPIC, FROM WHICH ROEL CONCLUDES THAT AN APOLOGY BEFORE AN ACCUSATION INDICATES A DEFENSIVE ATTITUDE. ROEL WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT IS NOT PLEASANT TO HAVE A COMMUNIST COUNTRY ANYWHERE IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, BUT IF THERE HAS TO BE ONE, IT IS BETTER THAT IT BE ON THE YUGOSLAV THAN ON THE SOVIET PATTERN, WORKING TO SPREAD REVOLUTION. THERE MAY NOT BE MUCH OF A POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING A COMMUNIST COUNTRY INTO A NON-COMMUNIST ONE, BUT THERE MIGHT BE A POSSIBILITY OF MODIFYING THE FORM COMMUNISM TOOK. (MEXICO DID NOT WORRY PARTICULARLY ABOUT CUBA'S EXPORTING REVOLUTION TO MEXICO, SINCE IT WAS ADDRESSING ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS THROUGH ITS OWN REVOLUTIONARY PHILOSOPHY.) FROM HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH CASTRO, ROEL THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS A CHANCE FOR NEGOTIATION BETWEEN THE US AND CUBA ON THE ISSUE OF CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE, AND THAT ELIMINATION OF THE US TRADE EMBARGO AGAINST CUBA COULD BE BARGAINING ELEMENT IN ANY SUCH NEGOTIATION. HE THOUGHT THE POSSIBILITY OF RESUMPTION OF TRADE ON A GREATER SCALE WITH THE US COULD BE THE FIRST STEP IN GIVING THE CUBANS A CHANCE TO BREAK OR AT LEAST DIMINISH THE SOVIET HOLD OVER CUBA AND MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF A YUGOSLAV-TYPE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR.

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4. ROEL ASKED ME TO LET HIM KNOW IF THERE WAS ANYTHING MORE THE US THOUGHT MEXICO COULD DO WITH CUBA ON THIS QUESTION, AND EXPRESSED MEXICO'S FULL SUPPORT FOR THE US GOAL OF ELIMINATING OR REDUCING THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA. I EXPRESSED THANKS FOR WHAT MEXICO HAD DONE ALREADY, AND EXPLAINED THAT THE REASON FOR MY BRIEFING HIM WITH THE LATEST INFORMATION WAS BOTH TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION FOR MEXICO'S HELP AND TO LET HIM KNOW THAT THE PROBLEM CONTINUED TO BE ONE OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE USG. LUCEY

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NNN

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